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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001100

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SUBJECT: TURKEY: SPECIAL REP. OZCELIK ON TURKEY-IRAQ NEXT
STEPS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 1726

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 1772

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY: Turkey-Iraq bilateral relations are set to gain another boost with PM Erdogan's visit to Baghdad to establish a TU-IZ senior level bilateral strategic commission o/a July 4 (please protect). GOT Special Representative for Iraq Murat Ozcelik hopes to gain Turkish National Security Council blessing for the Turkish side to accept the involvement of KRG President Massoud Barzani as part of the Iraqi delegation in Erdogan's planned meeting with Iraqi President Talabani during the Baghdad visit. Ozcelik conveyed his impression that the situation in Baghdad is "considerably better," with increasing signs of normalcy evident as he travels through the city. The Turks have proposed to the GOI serving as host of the next Iraq Business and Investment Conference, perhaps sometime in the Fall in Istanbul, and he agreed that the trilateral business event discussed at the U.S.-Turkish Economic Partnership Commission meeting in April be held at the same time. Kirkuk was not really on Ozcelik's agenda, but it remains on Turkey's. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (S) Ozcelik told Ambassador June 12 PM Erdogan will likely travel to Baghdad July 4 (please protect) en route to the D-8 Summit in Kuala Lumpur. The primary focus of the visit will be to kick-off a senior level bilateral strategic commission, as proposed by President Talabani during his March visit to Ankara. In addition, Erdogan will meet with President Talabani. In that meeting, Ozcelik believes it may be possible for KRG President Massoud Barzani to participate as part of the Iraqi delegation. He intends to seek concurrence for this at the next meeting of Turkey's National Security Council June 26. Ozcelik himself intends to remain in Baghdad after Erdogan's departure for Malaysia and hopes to meet one-on-one with Barzani.

[1](#)3. (S) Erdogan will be accompanied to Baghdad by Minister for Foreign Affairs Babacan, Foreign Trade Minister Tuzmen, Interior Minister Atalay, and Energy Minister Guler. According to Ozcelik, the Iraqi side of the bilateral commission will be comprised of direct counterparts,

including three ministers who handle aspects of Guler's energy portfolio (i.e., oil, electricity, and water). He is drafting the joint statement that will be released in connection with the launch of the commission, so the precise scope of the commission's activities is yet to be determined. Ozcelik anticipates keeping it fairly general, with flexibility built-in to enable other ministries to participate in commission meetings as required. Iraqi Deputy FM Abbawi reportedly suggested it might be useful to have a GOI delegation come to Ankara in the coming week or two to finalize details of the commission and the communique, and Ozcelik looked forward to this.

¶4. (S) Ozcelik said he had anticipated deputy prime ministers assuming the duties as the commission's functional coordinators, but noted FM Babacan is now likely to assume that role on behalf of the GOT, as reported ref B. Noting it was understandable the GOT would want to retain a level of flexibility to allow for inclusion of other ministries as both sides work to stand up the commission, Ambassador advised Ozcelik to be as forward-leaning as possible in identifying as many tangible ways as possible to foster cooperation with Iraq, be it on issues related to energy, border security, construction/infrastructure development, academic exchanges, or other people-to-people ties. Ozcelik said the Turks are more inclined to allow the business sector to push ahead on the economic issues, but noted Bilkent University is already involved in establishing links to institutions in the Kurdish region, including the founding of a new university there. Ambassador said the governments need

ANKARA 00001100 002 OF 002

to be pushing and university ties should be promoted elsewhere in the country.

¶5. (C) Ozcelik discussed with Vice President Abdel-Mehdi interest in Istanbul hosting the third Iraq Business and Investment Conference. October-November seemed the most likely time between Ramadan and likely Iraqi promised elections in December. Ozcelik said the Turks hope to be more successful in attracting international business participation than was the case at the Cairo conference in May. He would also like to consider the possibility of a trilateral U.S.-TU-IZ conference to discuss business cooperation in Iraq. Ambassador noted the idea had been broached at the last U.S.-Turkey Economic Partnership Commission meeting in Washington and would be useful to pursue both in identifying potential opportunities in Iraq as well as to counsel Turkish and Iraqi business on how best to approach and work with American companies.

¶6. (S) Ambassador raised the issue of the Akkas oil and gas fields and discussions he has had with Energy Minister Guler and BOTAS Chairman Duzyol, who oppose Syria as a route for Akkas gas exports they believe should come directly to Turkey. They fear gas sent to Syria would never make it to Turkey, but rather end up going south to Jordan and/or Egypt, and in any case do not wish to see Syria play any intermediary role. Ozcelik said he sees the utility of Akkas gas going to Syria and then on to Turkey. Not only does it make more commercial sense, including less pipeline construction, but it also gives Turkey additional leverage over the SARG and helps bring Damascus closer to Ankara and the west. Ambassador urged Ozcelik to discuss the issue with Guler and others to ensure the GOT speaks with one voice on the issue.

¶7. (S) COMMENT: Ozcelik referred only briefly to Kirkuk and Turkey's proportional representation scheme for its provincial assembly, and his remarks suggested a realization the idea is unfeasible. However, in a separate conversation June 13, Presidency/Prime Ministry Foreign Affairs Advisor Davutoglu told Ambassador he would take the issue up again with DPM Barham Salih, who is currently in Turkey. Ambassador reviewed U.S. objections to the Turks' idea. Davutoglu acknowledged our arguments, but said there remains

a need to prevent ethnic violence in Kirkuk as the provincial elections approach.

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WILSON